

CoxHealth News

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Heart and Stroke Experts Instrumental in New Law

CoxHealth heart and stroke experts instrumental in new law that prioritizes care for stroke and heart attack patients; EMS required to transport patients directly to designated centers

Governor Matt Blunt signed new legislation today that requires emergency medical services to transport acute stroke and heart attack patients to a designated stroke or STEMI care center, rather than the closest facility. The legislation strengthens efforts to protect Missourians' from the fatal and debilitating effects of strokes and heart attacks.

The new law creates a statewide "time critical diagnosis system" for stroke and ST-elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI), a serious type of heart attack. Missouri is the first state in the nation to enact such legislation.

The legislation was developed by a task force which included Dr. Scott Duff, a neurologist and medical director of the CoxHealth Stroke Center. Dr. Duff served as the stroke task force chairman. Several other CoxHealth experts were members of the group.

Research shows patients transported to these centers, rather than simply the nearest hospital, have higher survival rates. CoxHealth is designated as both a stroke and STEMI center.

"The legislation is going to help organize hospitals in the state so that we can all work together to create a better system of care for the people of Missouri who suffer a stroke or heart attack," says Dr. Duff. "This legislation puts those two diagnoses on the same level as trauma care in our country."

"If we waste time in the transport of a patient to an appropriate center, we lose the chance to save brain cells. The sooner we treat people with reperfusion therapy or tPA, the clot-busting drug, the better they do. It's the difference between the patient going home, going to a nursing home or dying," says Dr. Duff.